

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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TRSE-00 /080 W
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R 130950Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5382
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 DACCA 3854

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, BG
SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR FY-1979-
BANGLADESH

REFS: A. STATE 133136, B. DACCA 1570

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY'S ASSESSMENT OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN BANGLADESH (IN RESPONSE TO REFTTEL A) FOLLOWS THE PARM RESPONSE (REFTTEL B). THE JUSTIFICATION FOR A BILATERAL PROGRAM HERE IS BASED ON OUR EXPECTATION THAT THE MILITARY, ESPECIALLY THE ARMY, WILL CONTINUE TO BE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE IN THE BANGLADESHI POWER STRUCTURE. THROUGH CAREFULLY SELECTED PROGRAMS, OF WHICH FOR NOW THE IMET APPEARS THE MOST PROMISING, WE HOPE TO ESTABLISH OVER THE LONG TERM FRIENDLY AND CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THE BANGLADESHI ARMED FORCES. SUCH RELATIONS SHOULD SERVE TO COUNTER-BALANCE THE INFLUENCE WHICH MAY FLOW FROM SOVIET OR PRC MATERIEL ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH.
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WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO ENTER INTO COMPETITION FOR THE CON-
CESSIONAL SUPPLY OF LETHAL EQUIPMENT, BUT BELIEVE THAT THERE
CONTINUES TO BE A PLACE FOR US SUPPLY OF COMMUNICATIONS,
TRANSPORTATION, AND AUXILIARY EQUIPMENT. THIS RESPONSE
HAS BEEN CLEARED WITH CONCERNED MEMBERS OF THE COUNTRY
TEAM; NOTE THAT A DAO IS NOT YET FUNCTIONING HERE. END
SUMMARY.

2. THE ONLY CURRENT US-FUNDED PROGRAM AIDING BANGLADESH SECURITY IS AN IMET PROGRAM WHICH BEGAN IN FY-77 WITH A \$50,000 ALLOCATION AND WHICH HAS BEEN FUNDED AT \$200,000 FOR FY-78. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN OCCASIONAL COMMERCIAL SALES OF EQUIPMENT, ALL NON-LETHAL AND ALL IN THE COMMUNICATIONS OR TRANSPORTATION CATEGORY. BANGLADESH HAS REQUESTED (AND THE EMBASSY HAS SUPPORTED THIS REQUEST) A VESSEL WHICH CAN BE USED AS A HYDROGRAPHIC RESEARCH SHIP.

3. DURING THE REGIME OF SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN BANGLADESH RECEIVED AIR FORCE EQUIPMENT PRIMARILY FROM THE SOVIET UNION AND SECONDARILY FROM INDIA, THE ARMY AND NAVY BEING DEPENDENT LARGELY ON WHAT WAS LEFT BY DEPARTING PAKISTANI FORCES. SINCE THE FALL OF MUJIB IN AUGUST, 1975, THE POLITICAL CLIMATE WITH REGARD TO THE UNITED STATES HAS MUCH IMPROVED. WE WISH TO BE HELPFUL TO BANGLADESH IN ITS MILITARY TRAINING AND, TO AN EXTENT, ITS MILITARY SUPPLY WITHIN LIMITATIONS WHICH INCLUDE FORESTALLING SIGNIFICANT DIVERSIONS FROM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, AVOIDANCE OF RELIANCE ON (OR REDEVELOPMENT OF) COMMUNIST SOURCES OF MILITARY TRAINING, AND CURTAILING OF ANY ASPECT OF AN ARMS RACE IN THE EASTERN REACHES OF THE SUBCONTINENT OR THE INTRODUCTION OF MORE SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS IN THE AREA. NONE-THELESS, THE BANGLADESH MILITARY HAS REQUIREMENTS FOR BOTH

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INTERNAL SECURITY AND EXTERNAL CREDIBILITY IN WHICH WE CAN ASSIST WITHIN THE LIMITATIONS MENTIONED ABOVE.

4. IT SEEMS EVIDENT THAT THE MILITARY WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN BANGLADESH EVEN FOLLOWING THE SCHEDULED GENERAL ELECTIONS IN DECEMBER, 1978, AND THE ASSUMED RETURN, THEN, IF INDEED THE ELECTIONS ARE HELD, TO A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT. WHILE THIS ROLE IS AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE PARTIALLY POLITICAL, THE MILITARY ARE OF IMPORTANCE ALSO IN DISASTER RELIEF IN A COUNTRY WHICH IS PRONE TO CALAMITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO US TO MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP THE RELATIONSHIPS WE HAVE WITH THIS KEY SECTOR OF THE POPULATION. ONE MEANS OF DOING SO IS TO CONTINUE (IN ONE SENSE, REVIVE) THE TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH WHICH THE SENIOR OFFICERS ARE FAMILIAR FROM THEIR DAYS IN THE PAKISTAN MILITARY PRIOR TO BANGLADESHI INDEPENDENCE. THE SECOND WAY IS TO BE RESPONSIVE WITHIN LIMITS TO EQUIPMENT REQUESTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS AREA WHICH ARE IMPORTANT IN BOTH THE SECURITY AND DISASTER RELIEF ROLES OF THE ARMED FORCES. WE WOULD ALSO WISH TO CONSIDER SUPPLY OF SMALL ARMS AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE SHOULD POLITICAL CONDITIONS REMAIN AS THEY ARE NOW. ALL EQUIPMENT

WOULD, WE PROPOSE, COME UNDER CASH COMMERCIAL SALES.

5. SPECIFIC ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS RAISED IN PARAGRAPH 4,
REFTEL (A) FOLLOWS:

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AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 DACCA 3854

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

A. BANGLADESH IS BOUNDED ON LAND ONLY BY BURMA AND INDIA. WITH REGARD TO BURMA, NO CONVENTIONAL THREAT IS PERCEIVED. WITH INDIA, THERE IS A FEAR IN SOME LOCAL QUARTERS THAT INDIA MAY AT SOME TIME WISH TO ADD BANGLADESH TO ITS TERRITORIES. THIS PERCEPTION HAS MARKEDLY DIMINISHED WITH THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN INDIA. HOWEVER, THERE IS FELT BY THE BDG A CONTINUING THREAT OF INCURSION FROM BOTH BURMESE AND INDIAN TERRITORY, ESPECIALLY IN THE HILL AREAS NEAR CHITTAGONG. THE BDG FEELS THAT THE DESAI GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE (AND HAS TAKEN) STEPS TO CURTAIL INCURSIONS FROM OTHER PORTIONS OF INDIA (SPECIFICALLY, MEGHALAYA AND WEST BENGAL). WE WOULD AGREE THAT DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES ARE STILL LIKELY IN THE HILL AREAS BUT WOULD ADD (AS DO MOST BANGLADESHIS) THAT THE NATURE OF THE TERRAIN AND THE PEOPLES INVOLVED (WHO ARE ETHNIC MINORITIES IN EACH COUNTRY) PROBABLY PRECLUDE TOTAL CONTROL BY ANY OF THE THREE COUNTRIES INVOLVED. DISSIDENCE CAN BE ABETTED FROM ACROSS A BORDER, BUT IT CANNOT ALWAYS BE DIRECTED. IN THE HILL AREAS OF BANGLADESH
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THE PRINCIPAL MEANS EMPLOYED TO COUNTERACT THE DISSIDENCE ARE MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN ROLES FOR A MODERN ECONOMY. OUTSIDE THE HILL AREAS, DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATION WITH THE NEW INDIAN GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY HAS BEEN REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL IN STOPPING INDIAN SUPPORTED INCURSIONS.

B. THERE IS A CURRENT THREAT AS MENTIONED IN SUB-PARAGRAPH A ABOVE. IN ADDITION, THERE IS AN ENDEMIC THREAT TO INTERNAL LAW AND ORDER, ESPECIALLY IF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS DETERIORATE. BANGLADESH, MOST NOTABLY SINCE THE FIGHT AGAINST PAKISTAN IN 1971, BUT EVEN BEFORE, HAS BEEN AN AREA IN WHICH THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION HAS BEEN CHRONICALLY POOR. WITH SOMEWHAT BETTER ECONOMIC CONDITIONS INTERNAL SECURITY HAS IMPROVED SINCE 1975. IT COULD, HOWEVER, CHANGE AND THE MILITARY MIGHT BE CALLED UPON TO ACT IN SUPPORT OF THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION TO ASSURE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH ECONOMIC STABILITY COULD BE PRESERVED. IF INDIA WERE TO CHANGE ITS ATTITUDE, POSSIBLY IN THE FACE OF RAPIDLY DECLINING LAW AND ORDER, BANGLADESH COULD BECOME A TARGET FOR INDIAN INTERVENTION TO RESTORE ORDER. THUS BOTH CONTINUED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE ABSENCE OF CONDITIONS WHICH MIGHT TEMPT INDIA ARE DEPENDENT ON DOMESTIC STABILITY; IN SOME CASES THIS WOULD DEPEND UPON TRAINED AND EQUIPPED MILITARY FORCES LOYAL TO THE REGIME IN DACCA.

C. THE BDG HAS NO PLANS FOR A MAJOR EXPANSION OF ITS PRESENT MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT OR FOR THE ACQUISITION OF HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. WE HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN TOLD THAT ITS MILITARY MISSION IS TWO- FOLD: (1) MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY, INCLUDING DEFENSE AGAINST BORDER INCURSIONS, AND (2) DELAY AN ORGANIZED CROSS-BORDER ATTACK UNTIL UNITED NATIONS OR OTHER ASSISTANCE CAN BRING ABOUT

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A CEASE FIRE. BANGLADESH'S EXPENDITURE ON DEFENSE IS THE LOWEST OF THE THREE PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES IN SOUTH ASIA. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR IT TO TRIM THIS EXPENDITURE MUCH AND HAVE ANY PROSPECT OF CARRYING OUT THE MISSIONS ASSIGNED: FURTHERMORE, THE PRESENT LEADERSHIP IS WELL AWARE OF THE NECESSITY (FOR MORALE PURPOSES AS WELL AS TO ACHIEVE SOME DEGREE OF MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS) OF MEETING THE REASONABLE NEEDS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

D. THE DEPARTMENT IS, OF COURSE, AWARE OF THE "WISHFUL THINKING" EMBODIED IN THE BANGLADESH WANT LIST

PRESENTED LAST YEAR. IF AND WHEN THIS QUESTION IS APPROACHED ON A MORE REALISTIC BASIS, THE BDG WILL LIKELY SEEK TRAINING, SMALL ARMS, TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT (LAND AND AIR, INCLUDING HELICOPTERS), COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND RESEARCH VESSELS. WE CAN ANTICIPATE THAT THE BANGLADESHIS WILL SEEK THE MOST FAVORABLE POSSIBLE FINANCIAL TERMS; WE CANNOT AT THIS POINT PREDICT WHAT THEY WILL SETTLE FOR.

(1) TRAINING: FINANCED UNDER IMET, EXCEPT FOR PART OF INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL WHICH WOULD BE FINANCED BY BDG ITSELF. THE MILITARY INTENDS TO USE THE RETURNED TRAINEES INITIALLY AS INSTRUCTORS, TO SOME EXTENT IN A STAFF COLLEGE BEING OPENED WITH BRITISH ASSISTANCE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE IMET PROGRAM IS COORDINATED INFORMALLY THERE WITH OUR BRITISH AND AUSTRALIAN COLLEAGUES, SO THAT THERE IS NO OVERLAP AND THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DOVETAILING OF THE THREE PROGRAMS. WE SEE NO LESS COSTLY ALTERNATIVE AND ENDORSE THE TRAINING ROLE TO BE ASSIGNED TO THE RETURNED TRAINEES.

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R 130950Z JUL 77
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 DACCA 3854

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(2) EQUIPMENT: FOR MOST EQUIPMENT WE WOULD SEE THE PURCHASES ON A COMMERCIAL SALES BASIS. IF A RESEARCH VESSEL AND/OR SMALL ARMS WERE AVAILABLE FROM SURPLUS THIS WOULD BE A PREFERABLE MEANS TO REDUCE COSTS TO BANGLADESH. IT WOULD REQUIRE A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION ON BEHALF OF

BANGLADESH, AN ACTION WHICH HAS BEEN AND IS SUPPORTED BY THE EMBASSY. U.S. INTERESTS TO BE SERVED FOR BOTH EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING HAVE BEEN INDICATED EARLIER IN THIS MESSAGE. ADDITIONALLY, IN THE CASE OF THE HYDROGRAPHIC VESSEL THERE IS A MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTEREST IN ASSISTING BANGLADESH IN THE CHARTING AND EXPLOITATION OF ITS COASTAL AND RIVERINE WATERS.

E. AS STATED IN DACCA 3188 IN RESPONSE TO STATE 122750, WE FORESEE NO MAJOR IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY, DEBT SERVICE CAPABILITY OR DEVELOPMENT PLANS IF MORE MODEST (THAN THE 1976 WANT LIST) REQUESTS TO THE UNITED STATES FROM THE BDG WERE MET. INDEED, AS WE HAVE POINTED OUT ABOVE, THE CLIMATE FOR DEVELOPMENT MIGHT WELL BE IMPROVED WERE IT CLEAR TO ALL THAT THE MILITARY WAS ABLE TO
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MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER AND, ADDITIONALLY, THE DISASTER RELIEF CAPABILITY OF THE ARMED FORCES WOULD BE ENHANCED BY SEVERAL OF THE ANTICIPATED EQUIPMENT REQUESTS.

F. WE WOULD ANTICIPATE NO INCREASE IN U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL IN COUNTRY. AT PRESENT THE TRAINING PROGRAM IS BEING HANDLED BY THE POLITICAL SECTION AND SUCH COMMERCIAL SALES AS HAVE OCCURRED BY THE ECONOMIC SECTION. A DEFENSE ATTACHE IS TO ARRIVE THIS MONTH BUT OUR UNDERSTANDING IS THAT HE WOULD NOT BE LEGALLY ABLE TO ADMINISTER A SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. WE DO NOT WANT ADDITIONAL RESIDENT PERSONNEL FOR THIS PURPOSE; WE HOPE WE WILL NOT NEED THEM.

G. AS NOTED EARLIER, TRAINING IS AVAILABLE FROM AUSTRALIA AND BRITAIN BUT WE HAVE AVOIDED OVERLAPPING AND ARE WORKING TO MAKE THE PROGRAMS COMPLEMENTARY. SOME AIRCRAFT TRAINING IS BEING RECEIVED IN CHINA FOR AIRCRAFT OBTAINED FROM THAT SOURCE. BRITAIN AND CHINA HAVE BEEN THE PRINCIPAL SUPPLIERS RECENTLY, INCLUDING SMALL ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM CHINA AND A FRIGATE FROM BRITAIN. OTHER SOURCES WHICH MIGHT BE USED IF THE UNITED STATES DID NOT AGREE TO SELL EQUIPMENT WOULD BE CHINA FOR SMALL ARMS AND JAPAN FOR VEHICLES (ALREADY QUITE ACTIVE) AND COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT.

H. THE AMOUNTS WE HAVE CONSIDERED IN THIS MESSAGE ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE REGION.

I. SINCE GENERAL ZIAUR RAHMAN ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY IN APRIL, HE HAS RELEASED A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS. AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER REMAIN, BUT WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER RELEASES AS THE POLITICAL CLIMATE REMAINS STABLE. RETURNED INSURGENTS FROM INDIA ARE BEING REINCORPORATED INTO SOCIETY. ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS HAVE BEEN HELD AND THOSE FOR MUNICIPAL
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COUNCILS AND DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES ARE SCHEDULED. NATIONAL ELECTIONS ARE SLATED FOR DECEMBER, 1978. A DETERIORATION IN SECURITY OR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS COULD, OF COURSE, UPSET THIS SCHEDULE. THERE IS NO EVIDENT CONNECTION BETWEEN SECURITY ASSISTANCE REQUESTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES IN BANGLADESH.

J. BANGLADESH IS NOT SUPPLIER OF ARMS. ITS PURCHASES ARE SMALL.

K. THE TRAINING PROGRAMS WHICH BANGLADESH HAS REQUESTED FOR FY-77 (TRAINEES HAVE ALREADY DEPARTED FOR THE U.S.) AND FOR FY-78 FALL INTO THE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CATEGORY ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY. WE HAVE, IN DEALING WITH THE BANGLADESH MILITARY, ENCOURAGED THEM IN SUCH TRAINING AND THIS IS WHAT THEY DESIRED. IN EFFECT, THEY ARE TRAINING TRAINERS. SOME TRAVEL COSTS ARE BEING ABSORBED BY THE BDG. WERE SALES MADE, EQUIPMENT-RELATED COSTS WOULD BE MINIMAL AND WOULD, ON THE BASIS OF PAST EXPERIENCE, BE BORNE BY THE BDG.

6. CONCLUSIONS: WHAT WE ARE ADVOCATING IS A LIMITED PROGRAM FROM WHICH WE ANTICIPATE DEFINITE BUT MOSTLY LONG-TERM RESULTS. OBVIOUSLY, WE CANNOT ASSESS WITH ANY PRECISION A PROGRAM WHICH HAS JUST SENT ITS FIRST STUDENTS TO THE U.S. OUR PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION IS THE CONTINUATION IN FY 1979 OF AN IMET PROGRAM AT THE SAME LEVEL AS IN FY 1978. IN ADDITION, WE RECOMMEND A PRESIDENTIAL DETERMINATION WHICH WOULD PUT BANGLADESH IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS ITS NEIGHBORS. THE BANGLADESHIS ARE SEEKING TO OBTAIN MORE EXPENSIVE ITEMS (SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT) ON A CONCESSIONAL BASIS FROM THE UK AND THE PRC, AND HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE REASONABLE (AND NON-LETHAL) REQUEST FOR A SHIP SUITABLE FOR HYDROGRAPHIC WORK, WE DO NOT CONSIDER THAT OUR INTERESTS HERE ARE OF SUCH A NATURE AS TO ENCOURAGE, MUCH LESS REQUIRE, THAT WE COMPETE FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPPLYING MORE COSTLY AND VISIBLE EQUIPMENT AT U.S. EXPENSE.

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